HE MODERN WRITER

SHERWOOD ANDERSON

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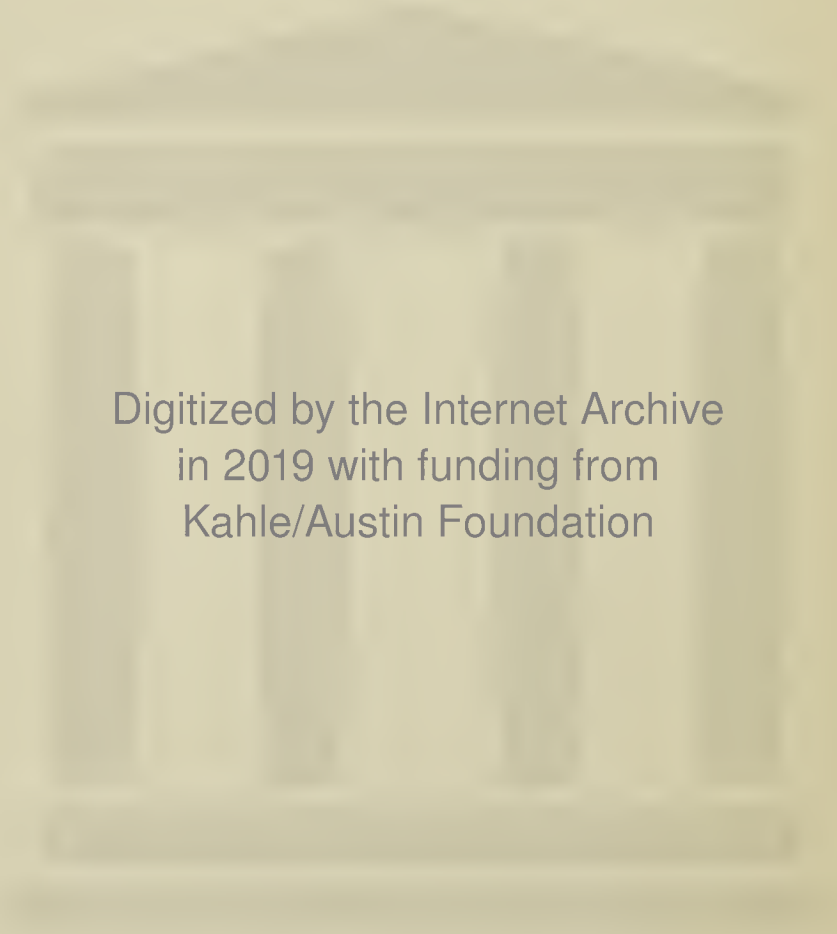

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BY SHERWOOD ANDERSON

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BY SHERWOOD ANDERSON

AFTER ALL it is not very strange that we in America have been a long time coming to the beginning of something like a national literature. Nations are not made in a short time and we Americans have been trying to make rather a large nation. In a compact small country in which for hundreds of years the same people have lived, slowly building up traditions, telling old tales, singing old songs, the story teller or the poet has something in

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which he can rest. People grown old, as a people, on the same land, through which old rivers flow, looking out for generations upon the same great plains and up into the same mountains, come to know each other in an intimate way unknown to us here. The son following in the footsteps of a father dreams old dreams. The land itself whispers to him. Stories are in the very air about the writer. They spring up out of the soil on which for many hundreds of years people of one blood have been born, have lived, suffered, had moments of happiness and have died.

In America the writer is faced with a situation that is unique. Our country is vast. In it are to be found so many different conditions of life, so many different social traditions that the writer who attempts to express in his work something national is in an almost impossible position. At best, as yet, he can

only snatch at fragments. California is not Maine. North Dakota is not Louisiana. Ohio is not North Carolina. We are as yet strangers to each other. We are all of us just a little afraid of each other. Time only can weld us together, make us one people, make us understand each other. And in understanding alone is the real love of comrades, that is the beginning of a real love of our country.

Now I am an American writer and I have been by critics in general classed among that rather vague group known as the Moderns. I have set myself here to speak to you on the subject of modern American writing. The whole business of expressing definite opinions is new to me. I am in my nature a teller of tales, not a preacher, and I have been told that in trying to address any considerable number of people on a large subject it is a mistake to try to cover too much ground, that the writer should

confine himself to the making of a few points, but how I am to do that on such a subject as Modernism I do not know. As a matter of fact I have, within the last year, written a book on the subject, a book called *A Story Teller's Story* and in it there are I believe something like a hundred and thirty thousand words. Now that the book, half a tale, half an attempt to put down certain notions of my own, is written, I look forward eagerly to the getting of my hands on the proofs. There are so many things I shall not succeed in getting said, even in a large book.

As everyone knows, there is in the world at this time what is broadly termed a Modern movement. It has expressed itself in a great many ways. In a short time within the last fifteen or twenty years, it has practically revolutionized painting all over the world. It has crept into the writing of prose, into the making of

song, into sculpture, into architecture. Although you may not realize it the fact is that the neckties worn by many men in our city streets and the dresses worn by the women have been influenced by the movement. The street scene of the American city is becoming more colorful, designs are bolder. The modern movement is beginning to express itself in buildings. In our residences we are less inclined to copy the impulses of old lands. Architecture, long one of the most dead and dreary of the arts as practiced in America, is becoming alive. It will become every year, I believe, more alive.

But it would be impossible for me, in a short article to speak in any general way on so broad a subject. It will be enough if I can give you some notions of what the present day American writer is faced with, what conditions he has to meet, what difficulties are to be overcome, what

in my opinion is making American writing so bad and what in present day conditions tends to make it better.

As no man can speak of the writing of a country without saying something of the history of the intellectual life of the country, I shall have to begin by speaking of that.

It is, I think, pretty well understood among us that the intellectual life of America had its home nest in New England. Our culture is as yet a puritanical New England culture. The New England states, all cold, hard and stony, produced a rather cold and stony culture, but the New Englander, like so many repressed and defeated peoples, was intellectually energetic. He spread his notion of life out over the country. Living as he did in a land where the ground was cold and comparatively unproductive underfoot and the skies cold and forbidding overhead, he spent a great deal of

his time cultivating God. His art impulse was non-sensual, intellectual. Life to the New Englander was not to be lived here and now. Life was to be spent in preparation for a life after death. Love of his fellow man did not enter into the New Englander's scheme, and the arts were made the servants of morality. There was so much of life of which the New Englander was forbidden to speak, toward which he did not dare be too sympathetic that as a result and while New England ruled, gentility and respectability became the passion of our writers. In literature sins might be committed in France or in some vague place far away like the South Seas, but among the heroes and heroines of the writer's fancy there must be no sin. As that was a quite impossible supposition, in as much as the writer must after all deal with human beings, the writers found a way out. The "good" and the "bad" man notion was played up to

the limit. Women in books became all virgins or adventuresses. The good man had a hard struggle before him but he always ended by getting rich and marrying the virgin, after almost falling into the clutches of the adventuress. The puritanic mind was satisfied. It was made happy. The man reader of the books could always in the end follow with satisfaction the fancy of the writer and end by becoming a millionaire and the woman reader could in fancy get married, not as so often happens in real life by using methods that would shock the puritan beyond recovery, but simply by virtue of inherent goodness and virginity. It was a kind of patent formula that always worked in books. And in books and in the "movies" it still works pretty well. If any of you want to become writers and want to succeed it is still the best of all formulas to follow.

It all fitted in so neatly, you see.

For while in our schools and colleges and in our literature the puritan, the New Englander ruled, people were pouring into America from all over western Europe. The cold blood of the men of the North was being mixed constantly with the warmer blood of the South. Italians came. The Greeks and the southern Slavs came in hundreds of thousands. The eager highly temperamental Jews and the imaginative Celts poured in. On the West coast they got the Spaniard and the Mexican, and no man ever, I believe, accused the Spaniard or the Mexican of being puritanic.

The intellectual life of the country was being formed and controlled by English Protestants while the physical American was being built up of a mixture of all of the bloods of the western world and the process is still, I believe, going on. In our political thought the Adamses of New England, with their desire to estab-

lish an intellectual aristocracy, are still, I believe, more powerful than Lincoln the artist democrat, and, although by the world in general Whitman is recognized as our one great American poet, I have heard of no general movement to introduce him into our public schools to take the place of the decidedly second rate and imitative New Englander, Longfellow.

I am sure that almost everyone nowadays knows that there is at this moment something happening in the spiritual life of the American people. In the first place, there has been for a long time now, and particularly among our younger men and women, a rather intense boredom with the more obvious impulses of our American life. There is a new restlessness that is more and more expressing itself in individual revolution against the social laws and customs of another age. Old gods are dead and we have all gone

hunting new gods. Men and women are seeking expression for their lives in new and bolder ways and everywhere among writers the Modern is but the man who is trying to give expression to the newer impulses of our lives in books, in song, in painting and in all the others of the seven arts.

You must understand of course that as a nation we have put something across. Coming to America as we did, in reality scattered herds of peoples from dozens of European countries, often not speaking the same language, not having back of us the same traditions, spreading ourselves out rapidly over a vast country, cutting down forests, building railroads and bridges over rivers, mountains and deserts, learning to know each other a little in the process, building cities and towns, making the mines produce, making the land produce, we had for a long time need of all our energies for purely

physical purposes. A poet or a painter in California in '49 or in the middle west in Abraham Lincoln's day would have been a nuisance and a pest.

A man I know was during the war arrested and sent to jail for being opposed to war, and I was discussing his fate with a friend.

"He ought to be sent to jail," said my friend. "He ought to be hung. Any man ought to be hung who doesn't know any better than to be right when all other decent healthy people in the world are wrong."

However, let me return to my theme. I am trying to sketch briefly some of the conditions that are at the bottom of what I conceive to be going on nowadays in American writing. When we Americans had got our country pretty well settled and had fought and won our Civil War, something else happened. There came a revolution more widespread and deep

in its meaning than any other revolution that has ever happened in the western world. Starting out as we did as an agricultural people we Americans found ourselves suddenly landed in the very midst of the industrial age. From being a nation of farmers, craftsmen and merchants we became, almost within a generation, the leading industrial nation of the world. We became factory hands rather than craftsmen, owners of factories rather than land owners.

We had got into a new age almost over night. What had happened to us?

Standardization, for one thing.

Let me explain. As a natural result of industrial growth came standardization. As anyone will understand, the man who owns a factory for the making of women's dresses, chewing gum, cigars, automobiles, men's hats, must, if his factory is to grow to the huge output he desires, create in the public mind a widespread

demand for one kind of cigar, one kind of hat, one style of dress, one make of automobile.

Advertising as a force in our American life began to grow and here it is that the present day American writer came into flower.

As a natural result of the demand for standardization of taste and material desires came the modern magazine. The magazine with a circulation of a million or two million became not unusual. The real purpose, as everyone understands, was to create through advertising, a nation-wide demand for certain commodities. The magazines were business institutions run by business men with business ends in view. They have served the purpose for which they were created admirably and taken for what they are, that is to say at bottom merely as propaganda instruments for business expansion, no man can quarrel with them.

However, it happens you see that the advertising medium, put out frankly as an advertising medium, cannot exist. Although the modern man and woman of the streets has been pretty effectually standardized as regards his hat, the cigarette he smokes, the automobile he drives, he cannot in reality be standardized. Few of us will as yet order our wives from a mail order house. Although in America and during the long period during which we have all been so busy conquering the mechanical world we have in general looked upon the poet or the artist as rather a sissy, a nut, a man who had better be brushed aside, we all have something of the poet and lover in us. We cannot, at least not as yet, spend our hours of leisure outside factory and office hours just looking at advertisements of factory products and becoming excited because some man has performed the heroic feat of going from the city of

New York to San Francisco, getting there in twenty-four hours in an aeroplane—instead of taking four or five days on a train, has found a machine that will get him there. We are really interested in the man in the machine — not in the machine itself.

Little thoughts leak in. We wonder why the man wanted to go to San Francisco in such a hurry—what he thought and felt as he rushed along—what he was up to. There are all kinds of disturbing little fancies. Our minds will not become standardized. They fly away from the machine to the man. There remains a curious interest in one another. Young men take girls on their arms and wander out at night into the darkness. Young men become friends and spend nights walking and talking together. Nothing that gets settled remains quite settled. When some of us become too old or tired to try any more to think or feel there is al-

ways youth coming on. Even marriage doesn't settle things for us although for a long time our novelists went on the assumption that it did.

We find ourselves having to be intrigued into the pages of the magazines —and if the magazines are to retain the large circulation they require to do their work of standardization writers must be made to serve their purpose.

The commercialization of the art follows as a perfectly natural result.

The popular writer is then just the man of talent who is willing to sell his talent to the business man who publishes the magazine or to the book publisher after large sales and the more talented he is the better he gets paid. There is a job to be done and he does it, keeping his eye always on the main chance, that is to say on the great unthinking buying public. His position is pretty secure. In America we are in the habit of thinking

of the thing that succeeds as good, and therefore the man whose books sell by the hundreds of thousands is looked up to with respect. If success is the standard of measurement how can we do anything else?

It happens, however, that the arts are not democratic, never have been, and probably never will be. There is a nigger in the woodpile. The ordinary standards of measurement do not quite work. We all have a vague feeling there is something very much wrong. There is.

Let us look at the situation a moment. If you are a man conducting a magazine that has a circulation of hundreds of thousands, or if you are a movie magnate owning a business in which there is a huge initial investment, you have to be pretty careful about treading on toes, do you not? Your readers or patrons must not be offended or driven away. You are appealing, must of necessity ap-

peal, to a large number of people, and among any large number of people there will be Catholics, Protestants, Christian Scientists, believers in the Garden of Eden, Darwinians, suburban housewives in large numbers, puritans, moralists, all kinds of people with all kinds of notions of the good and bad.

Very well then—if you are a writer intent on catching and holding the fancy of the crowd you have got to have a technique. You have got to become the artful dodger, have got to invent or learn the trick of creating in the mind of your audience the sensations of terror, delight, amusement, suspense, without in any way actually touching the reality of lives.

At the county fairs back in Ohio when I was a boy there used to be a kind of faker who went about with a machine. Into this machine he put a pound of sugar and started it going. It whirled

about with great rapidity and produced a kind of cloud-like candy concoction that looked tremendously inviting. A pound of sugar would make a bushel of the stuff, but when you had bought a bag of it and put a whole handful into your mouth it melted away to nothing.

That is in reality the effect desired in the manufacture of any popular art. It is the effect produced in reality by all the successful men, by the realists who pretend to give you photographic reproductions of life itself, by the respectable fine writers of the more conservative magazines and publishing houses, as well as the men who fill the pages of the cheap adventure magazines, the men called by the newspaper fraternity "the bunk shooters." You must seem to give a lot while really giving nothing. No one must be hurt. No one must be offended. No one must be made to think or feel. Keep it up and you will get rich.

To actually touch people's lives is the unforgivable sin. Both thinking and feeling are dangerous exercises, and besides people do not like them.

You have got to get a special technique but if you are a writer and can do it successfully you will be mighty well paid. Why, there are any number of writers in America who receive from two to three or even five thousand dollars for single short stories and if they are lucky and also sell movie rights they often get two or three times that much. Writers of the popular sort often make incomes of bankers or brokers, live during the summer in villas in Maine or in the California Carmel Highlands, drive expensive motor cars, own yachts and have a simply splendid time apparently and never during a long lifetime make a single contribution to the art of writing or write anything that a living soul would ever think of reading after the writer has

died or his temporary vogue has passed.

I hope you understand, however, that all this has nothing at all to do with the art of writing, that is to say in any sense in which real writers of the world, men who have cared something about their craft have always thought of it. These men have no more to do with the art of writing than the average American movie star has to do with the art of acting or the men who make the girls' heads you see on the covers of our American magazines have to do with the art of painting. It is all a kind of special thing. You live in San Francisco and write dialect stories concerning an imaginary kind of people who live in a Dutch settlement in the Pennsylvania hills, or you live in a New York hotel and write stories about cowboys or heroic lumberjacks. It is totally unnecessary to know life, and in fact it will be better for you to let life alone. Life, you see, is a complex delicate

thing. Anything may happen in life. We all know that. People hardly ever do as as we think they should. There are no plot short stories in life. All the clever tricks by which effects are to be got on the printed page are in reality a selling out of ourselves. If it is your purpose to live in a pasteboard world you have got to avoid storms. There is always that huge, comfortable, self-satisfied American audience made up of all kinds of people with little prejudices, hates and fears that must not be offended. To know men and women, to be in the least sympathetic with them in their actual trials and struggles is a handicap. If it is your desire to be that kind of a writer, to grow rich and be successful by writing and if you have a natural talent that can be made to serve your purpose, stay just as far away as possible from any real thinking or feeling about actual men and women. Stay in the pasteboard world.

Believe in your heroic cowboys and lumberjacks. Go to the movies all you can. Read the magazines. Go to the short story schools and learn the bag of tricks. Spend your time thinking up plots for stories and never by any chance let the plots grow naturally out of the lives and the hopes, joys and the sufferings of the people you are writing about. That is the road to success.

And now, men and women, I am afraid you will think me an ill-natured fellow. I have spent so large a part of my allotted time here in speaking of what in my opinion is tending to make writing in America so bad. It doesn't seem right. I must remember that I am from Chicago —a highly cultured center, surely—and that in Chicago we have a motto. Our city mayor got it up several years ago, and for a year or two it was plastered about everywhere on the walls and billboards of the city. "Put away your ham-

mer and get out your horn," it said.

Now I shall try to do that.

There is, you see, a modern movement in America. We are not so self-satisfied as we must often seem to strangers, to men from foreign parts. We still walk about and talk things over among ourselves. There is, if you are sensitive enough to feel it, a wistful something in the air here. You will feel it in any large crowd. At present the Modern Movement is perhaps a groping ill-defined movement but it exists. In painting there are a number of men who have stopped making pleasant enough drawings of the old swimming hole and the magazine cover lady, who have thrown overboard the tricks of realism and representation and the absorption in surface technique and who are trying to bring feeling and form back into painting. The same thing is going on in the writing of poetry. Architecture is freeing itself from imitation

of dead impulses and is taking new life.

In prose the movement is expressing itself in a growing number of men who are really trying to be honest to the materials in which they work.

Let me explain what I mean by that, if I can.

I think you will all agree with me that in an older day in America, when a great majority of the men who worked in the the crafts, the blacksmiths, silversmiths, shoemakers, harness makers, saddle makers, builders of vehicles, furniture, etc., worked in small shops, with a few apprentices to help, there was a feeling in the workman that later was pretty much destroyed.

The factory came and swept the individual workman aside and with him went much of the old workman's feeling toward tools and materials.

The workman in the Ford factory, for example, has nothing at all to do with

his tools or the materials in which he works. His own individual feeling toward tools and materials is ruthlessly suppressed. Individual reaction to tools and materials is simply not wanted. What is wanted is a highly standardized product turned out at a low manufacturing cost.

The hand of standardization is laid upon the workman in the factories as I have tried to show you how it is being laid upon the workman in prose who wants also to live on the expensive scale of the banker or the broker.

I have tried to show you here that the popular magazines are but factories for efficient standardization of the minds of people for the purpose of serving the factories. I think they do not really pretend to be anything else.

I am bringing no personal accusation against the factory owner or the publishers of factory-made literature. They are

business men and if I were a business man I would try to be a good one. I would try to make money. And anyway the individual factory owner or the individual owner or owners of a magazine with a circulation of hundreds of thousands has no more to do with the matter than have you and I. They also are caught in a trap. Present day conditions are but the natural result of our living in an industrial age. Until the impulse for vast production of second-rate goods and the tendency to be satisfied with second-rate art wears itself out or people grow tired of it things will go on just as they are.

Back of it all, of course, lies the silly notion that people can get happiness out of success, out of making money, the silly notion that any man can be happy doing poor or sloppy work no matter how much temporary success or praise he may win.

You must bear in mind that the mass

of people here in America are pretty much what the mass of people have always been in every other country in every age, that is to say, rather lazy-minded, pretty immature. We are given to childish pretense, to pretending to be the thing we secretly admire rather than to go to all the trouble of being it. We accept what is given us. For most of us, I suspect, bad hurried cheap work doesn't matter too much. It is the craftsman really who suffers.

Now if you will consider with me what I have just said and will bear in mind that the manufacturer of stories for popular magazines has nothing at all to do with writing, and if you will also bear in mind that the writer is but the workman whose materials are human lives you will get at what I am trying to say and will understand the attitude toward his work that the so-called Modern is trying to take.

The individual impulse in men to do good work goes on. Men are arising everywhere who are trying to be true to the very complex materials they have to try to handle. In spite of standardization the individual impulses of men as workmen cannot quite be put down.

As I have gone about in the streets of American towns and cities I have noticed that even the Ford cannot escape the workman impulse. Boys buy second hand Fords and rebuild them into 'Bugs' and these 'Bugs' are often enough light, graceful and fine. Ugly lines have been cut away. Something altogether lacking in grace has been made graceful and it would be worth while if people could come to understand that the boy who does that is a craftsman following a craftsman's impulse and is more important to the community than a dozen manufacturers of cheap novels, little tame verses or cheap magazine stories. He is meet-

ing the aesthetic needs of his nature with the materials at hand, and a Cezanne, a Matisse, a Turgenieff or a Shakespeare could do no more than that. The artist is after all but the craftsman working more intensively in more complex and delicate materials.

The artist who works in stone, in color, sounds, words, building materials, and often in steel, as in the designing of bodies for some of the finer automobiles, is but the craftsman working in materials that are often elusive and difficult to handle and bringing into his work not only the skill of the craftsman but also the attempt at an expression of some need of his own inner being. That is the whole story.

The Modern Movement, then, seen from this point of view, is in reality an attempt on the part of the workman to get back into his own hands some control over the tools and materials of his

craft. In certain fields it is very difficult. In the theatre, for example, the artist, to work at all, has to have an expensive equipment. There is needed a large investment and money doesn't like to take chances. It is much safer when the theater wants to be artistic to run into Belasco realism, bring a Child's restaurant onto the stage or have a real automobile cross the stage at thirty miles an hour—something of that sort, some stunt, is safer when large sums of money have to be spent.

However, the workman in words or in color has a better chance. If, for example, I can make my living by going somewhere and delivering a dull sermon, something like this, to a lot of good-natured patient people, or by working six months of the year in an advertising agency writing soap advertisements, I can perhaps save enough money to write disregarding the magazines for another

six months. I know one very good modern painter who becomes a house painter when he is broke, and one of America's finest poets works as a reporter on a newspaper. In America, just now, it is not too hard for a man to make a living, particularly if he is discreet enough not to have children.

And then things are slowly getting better. In his "*Life on the Mississippi*" Mark Twain said something to the effect that the writer in the end always wrote what the public and the editors wanted. "We often write what we think and feel but in the end we scratch all out and give them what they want," he said. I am not quoting exactly. You will find it in the book. The fact is that it was pretty much true in Twain's day and isn't quite so true now.

That the workman is a better and truer man when he is given control of the tools and materials of his craft is being

found out. There is a small public growing up that has discrimination enough to want good work. Honest books begin to sell a little. Honest painting that isn't just pretty picture making begins to sell. Puritanism, as such, is pretty well licked. It cannot any longer so easily suppress books of artistic merit because some housewife is afraid the morals of her daughter, who has just come home from the movies or the Follies, will be ruined by being told how babies happen to be born. The force of the New England moralistic culture is spent. Today in America any man of talent who writes a book that is significant, a work of art, can get it published and there will be critics to acclaim him. The real pioneering for the better workmen has been done by men like Whitman and Dreiser for the writers, and others like Stieglitz, Marin and the critics Rosenfeld, Cheney and others for the painters.

If you want to do good work and can pick up a living in some way there will be people to recognize what you are trying to do and perhaps no man has a right to ask more than that. There are ways to get moments of happiness out of life other than by making money and being successful and the men who grind out second-rate flashy stories for the magazines have their bad moments. They are not really happy men. It is no fun, believe me, to wake up in the middle of the night and to realize that you have sold out your own craft.

For it is as true as there is a sun in the sky that men cannot live in the end without love of craft. It is to the man what love of children is to the woman. When you are considering what it is that makes the younger generation so restless, what makes the workers on your buildings and in your factories such indifferent workmen, what makes so much of con-

temporary art cheap and transitory, consider also what the industrial age has tended to do to this old love of craft so deeply rooted in men.

It is a dangerous process. Soil the workman's tools and materials long enough and he may turn and kill you. You are striking at the very root of the man's being.

However, I do not want to be sensational. In spite of the growth of standardization there are for me many hopeful signs. Men are becoming increasingly conscious of what is being done to them. The very man who lends his talents to cheapness is unconvinced. He will come to you in private with an apology. "I have to live," he will say. "I have a wife and children. I am only doing cheap work for the time being. When I have made a little money I intend to do some honest, decent work."

In reality I think many men of talent

might be saved for the doing of good work in the arts if the whole situation could be clearly stated. Too often the younger man or woman who has talent does not get the situation in hand until he is too old to save himself. We have all been brought up with the notion, firmly planted in us, that to succeed in a material sense is the highest end for a life. Our fathers tell us that. Often our mothers tell us so. Schools and universities often enough teach the same lesson. We hear it on all sides and when we are young and uncertain our very youthful humbleness often enough betrays us. Are we to set ourselves up against the opinions of our elders? How are we to know that truth to ourselves, to the work of our own hands, to our own inner impulses, is the most vital thing in life? It has become almost a truism here in America that no man does good work in the arts until he is past forty. Nearly all the

so called Moderns, the younger men, so called, are already gray. It takes a long time for most men to get ground under their feet, to find out a little their own truth in life.

The effort to find out the truth is what is called the Modern Movement. It is growing. Do not have any doubt about that.

Let me state the matter again. It cannot be stated too often. The writer, the painter, the musician, the practitioner of any of the arts who wants to do real work and honest work has got to put money making aside. He has got to forget it. There is but one way in which the young man or woman of talent can defeat the corrupting influence of the present day magazines and most of the book publishers and that is by forgetting their existence and giving all his attention to his work. And again let me say that when I speak of corrupting influence I am not speaking of the men who run these in-

stitutions as corrupt individuals. I am speaking only in the workman's sense. I am speaking only of the workman in relation to his tools and materials.

Consider for a moment the materials of the prose writer, the teller of tales. His materials are human lives. To him these figures of his fancy, these people who live in his fancy should be as real as living people. He should be no more ready to sell them out than he would sell out his men friends or the woman he loves. To take the lives of these people and bend or twist them to suit the needs of some cleverly thought out plot to give your readers a false emotion is as mean and ignoble as to sell out living men or women. For the writer there is no escape, as there is no real escape for any craftsman. If you handle your materials in a cheap way you become cheap. The need of making a living may serve as an excuse but it will not save you as a crafts-

man. Nothing really will save you if you go cheap with tools and materials. Do cheap work and you are yourself cheap. That is the truth.

To speak again of the way out for the Moderns — for the young man or the young woman who wishes to do work for which he need not, in the end and when the temporary acclaim that so often follows cheap and flashy work has passed, be ashamed, well, there is one. In America it is not too difficult to make a living. Mr. Henry Mencken says that in America any man not a complete fool cannot help make a living, and there is some truth in what he says. If you have no money and no one will give you any, make your living in some other way and keep the real side of yourself for the honest work you want to do in your own craft. There are worse fates than being poor. If you have talent do not sell out your birthright. My own belief is that

there never was a people in the world more anxious for men of talent to stay on the track and be true to the crafts than we Americans. We all know something is wrong with the flood of cheap work we are always getting. The literary clubs and the various kinds of culture clubs that spring up everywhere are perhaps rather silly in some of their gropings but they mean something. Often enough the man who spends all of his own life absorbed in money making would really like his wife and children to have something else as an end in life. I suspect that is the real reason there are so many young men and women in colleges who have no real interest in scholarship. They want something and their parents want something for them. Is it any wonder they do not know what they want?

At bottom Americans are kind. They are good natured. So anxious are we as

a people for men of talent that it takes but the merest show of talent to get recognition among us. Why, any man or woman who wants to be respected has but to set himself up as a poet. He does not need to write poetry. Let him write a few verses. We will all invite him to dine with us, we will put up with his idiosyncracies and small vanities, we will nurse and feed him like a very babe.

And if he is a musician or a young painter we will, as likely as not, shell out our money and send him off to Paris to become as commonplace and unreal and successful as an artist as the very people we have been talking about here today.

But my preaching on this subject had better come to an end. It is a subject on which books might be written. When your young man or woman has made the sacrifices for the sake of a craft that I have spoken of as necessary—and they are not really sacrifices at all—the strug-

gle has but begun. There remains the question of talent and if you have talent that doesn't settle the matter.

There is no agreement among artists as to the ends they are seeking, no absolute standards. "A. E.", the famous Irish publicist, painter and poet once said that a literary movement consisted of several men of talent living at the same time and cordially hating each other.

That is the truth and yet it is not quite true. What it really means is that when men are devoted to their work there will still remain a wide difference of opinion as to methods, treatments of the subject, the baffling question of form achieved or not achieved — the question of when a craftsman's work becomes also a work of art. These are old questions about which all craftsmen have always struggled among themselves. It is all a queer and fascinating game just as life itself is queer and fascinating.

The real reward I fancy lies just in the work itself, nowhere else. If you cannot get it there, you will not get it at all.

And speaking for my craft I can say that it is tremendously worth while. You are undertaking a task that can never be finished. You are starting on a road that has no end. The longest life will be too short to ever really get you anywhere near what you want. And that I should say is the best part of the story.

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